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LGBTQ: Some Islamic Perspectives

Cosmic Duality/Pairs

Sanctity of Marriage

- Marriage, between **a man and woman**, is sacred. It is the foundation-stone of society.
- The institution of marriage is firmly protected and safeguarded in Islam.
- Allah's creation is of cosmic duality: **51:49 "And We created everything in pairs that you may reflect."** This includes examples such as the sun and the moon, the day and night... and the male and the female; sacred pairs.



Sexual Intimacy



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- Muslims **do not see sex as a sin**; rather it is viewed as an act of worship within the sanctity of marriage.
- Rasool Allah (saw) encouraged couples to enjoy intimacy as an expression of worshipping God.
- Contrast this to the Christian West historically, with a tension between procreation and desire/enjoyment.
- Even after the Enlightenment, sex has remained an area to be scientifically studied in the West; analysed and labelled (note the modern identity movements). This is not the case in many cultures where labels and identities are not so scrutinised and applied.

Sexual Orientation: Fluidity of Desire and Attraction

- Muslims centre God and God's laws in life.
- As developing brains grow, sensitivity to hormones, sexual desire and orientation can be fluid and change. Feelings and thoughts may be in flux.



Sexual Orientation



In Islam, our thoughts do not necessarily define us.
Instead, we are defined by our intentions and actions.

Muslims differentiate between **SSA** (same sex **attraction**) and **SSE** (same sex **experience**).

Same Sex Attraction is a **feeling, a desire** – and you are not held accountable for your feelings and desires, so long as you try to manage them - don't delve in them.

In fact, your thoughts and feelings, anything that goes on in your mind that is opposed to Islam and you try to manage: is a struggle that you are blessed & rewarded for.

As developing brains grow + sensitivity to hormones → **sexual desire can be fluid**

- Islam: we are not held to account for **thoughts** and desires as we are with actions.
- Certain sexual **acts** (zina, liwat, sihaq), **not desires** are prohibited.
- Tackling thoughts/feelings that conflict with Islam, is a personal struggle. **SSA v SSE**

Terms ‘Homosexuality’ and ‘Heterosexuality’ are modern (1869)

Essentialised

Thoughts → Behaviours → Identity

I am my thoughts → Identity label

VERSUS

Non-Essentialised paradigm:

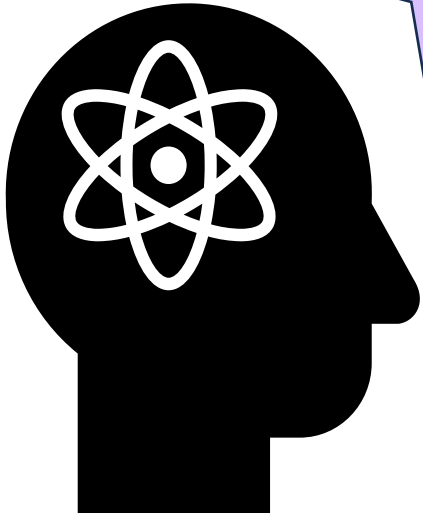
“I am not my thoughts. They do not define me. I am not identified by my thoughts.”

Modern view: **Thoughts + Behaviours + Desires + Actions have ALL been squashed into one identity label, e.g. ‘gay’.**

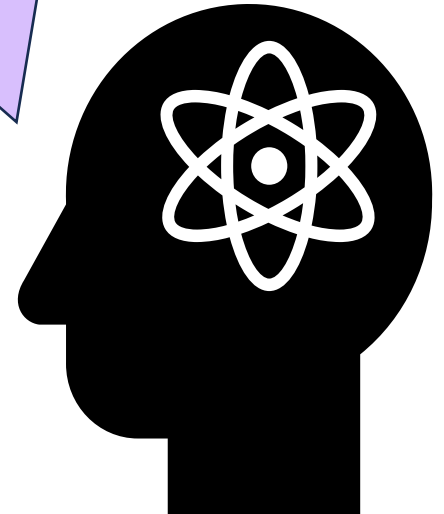


To be true to myself I need to act out my thoughts and desires → identity labels which promote a certain lifestyle.

My thoughts do not define me. My actions are what really count. I will live in accordance with my faith. I will find support, sustenance and forgiveness in my Creator and a compassionate community.



Current Ideological Gap



Postmodernism



Post-modernity has led to:

- **A loss of identity**, leading to a preoccupation with defining ourselves. Contrast this with **the ambiguity and openness enjoyed by many Muslim and Eastern cultures** e.g. men holding hands in public, and not defining the self by thoughts and feelings.
- **Individualism** being prioritised over family and community.
- **An age of 'feeling' and self identification** with religion and tradition being seen as barriers to self discovery. The mantra of 'Be your authentic self!' is a modern mantra.

Sexual Orientation: in Muslim societies



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- The **labels** 'Homosexuality' and 'Heterosexuality' as identities are modern (1869)
- Muslims/many cultures have not used identity labels for sexual orientation/desires. **Having same sex desire is not seen as a defining criteria in terms of an identity label.**
- Many Muslim countries only legally outlawed homosexuality after being colonised.
- Only certain sexual acts (zina, liwat, sihaq), **not desires**, are described as prohibited/haram.
- Islam teaches that **everyone has a right to their private life** and what remains behind closed doors is private.
e.g. it is not lawfully Islamic to spy on people so as to find evidence to arrest them.
- **Here lies an ambiguity/openness that is protected in Muslim society.**

Sexual Orientation: Qur'anic quotes



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- The Quranic narrative of Prophet Lot AS appears on 9 occasions; 6 mention male-male sexual acts
- 7:80-81 'And [We had sent] Lot when he said to his people, "Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds? Indeed, you approach men with desire, **instead of women**. Rather, you are a transgressing people.'"

'innakum la-ta'tuna 'rijala shahwatam min dunin'nisa'
(‘you approach men lustfully instead of women’).

- 26:165-166 'Do you approach males among the worlds. **And leave what your Lord has created for you as mates?** But you are a people transgressing.'
- Through the story of Prophet Lot, there is a scholarly **consensus** outlawing the act of homosexuality.

Theology

Qur'anic verses mentioned earlier

Difference between Same Sex Attraction and Same Sex Experience

Hadith, Bukhari "Allah forgives my Ummah for the evil deeds their souls may whisper or suggest to them as long as they do not act on it or speak."

Legal Aspect

Sexual Orientation is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act
Direct Discrimination
Indirect Discrimination
Harassment

Homosexuality

Muslim Societies in the Past

Suspicion + spying are not allowed.
Colonial laws based on Christian values brought harsher laws.

Identity Politics

Identity labels and lobbying are new, Western, liberal phenomena.

Freedom to Speak

As LGBTQ+ has become a matter of identity, it may seem that people of faith speaking against the act is abusing the person, but this is often not the case.

Scenario

- Samir lets his Muslim friends know he is experiencing Same Sex Attraction.
- His friends become cold and unwelcoming
- He no longer feels welcome in the prayer room and stops going
- The next thing you hear is that Samir has been feeling depressed as he feels hatred from the Muslim community
- School visits - are you allowed to pray next to someone from the LGBTQ community?



Sexual Orientation: Humanity and Compassion



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This slide is very important. The words below were from an 18 year old Muslim experiencing Same-Sex Attraction. He is now married with children and would define himself as straight. When he was 18, he would listen to Muslim lectures and scholars talk about people with same sex attraction.

- *“I can only recall **twice** when someone who spoke about homosexuality in Islam was compassionate and understanding enough to say that those are our brothers and sisters, and they need our support and help.”*
- *Every time, there was so much bitterness and anger that it would be like a “bullet hitting me, because I was experiencing what they were just speaking about in this intolerant way.”*
- *“Until the Muslim community find a way to offer a safe environment for people dealing with SSA to open up to compassionate individuals among us, **we will be losing many of our brothers and sisters** to leaving the religion altogether or even to suicide.”*
- He now helps young people experiencing SSA or SSE by providing a space where they find compassion and mercy.

Reference: *Sex Matters: Love, Marriage and The Sunnah*. A Muslimmatters.org publication

Support groups: Strong Support Foundation & The Straight Struggle Support Group

Humanity and Compassion



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As a Muslim community, we are not supposed to spy, pry or probe into people's intimate lives. **What God screens must remain screened.**

The inner struggles of people *must* be dealt with compassionately.

Allah created us **all** with nobility and dignity. Quran: "Laqad karamna bani Adam", means that Allah has honoured the children of Adam and Eve.

An-Nuayman was a companion of Rasool (saw). He would drink and be found drunk. Some companions cursed him. Rasool Allah said **"Do not curse him, for by Allah what I know about him is that he loves Allah and His Messenger."**

Your friend or companion who may be struggling with SSA is in need of your compassion and mercy towards them.

Gender Identity



Sex vs Gender

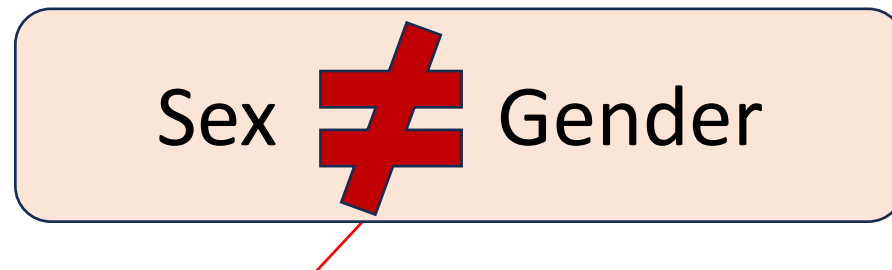


Biological sex is assigned at birth (based on phenotype/genitalia/chromosomes)

Sex = Male, female or intersex (a small number of people born with ambiguous genitalia)

Sex and gender have aligned normatively, for most of history.

Modern Gender Ideology decouples “sex” and “gender” - i.e. one can be biologically female but feel male, vice versa, or non-binary



Gender:

Moving on to Transgenderism



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- Gender is now being argued in some circles to be a social construct, e.g. a girl is given dolls to play with and that moulds her nature towards being a nurturer, whereas a boy is given Action Men and hence is moulded into competitiveness and leadership.

Society, it is being argued, moulds gendered behaviour, and this behaviour is not linked to biological sex.

- It is being argued that roles, norms, behaviours and expectations are dictated by society. Gender is being described as a **spectrum; not binary.**
- It is being argued that a person's sex and gender can now be different. So, a child may be born biologically male but wish to wear clothing that society defines as female...

Gender Constructionism

Gender is a **social construct**.
Inherent biological sex does not lead to differences in behaviour.

We 'perform' gender **due** to conditioning by parents/society eg toys, clothing, expectations.....

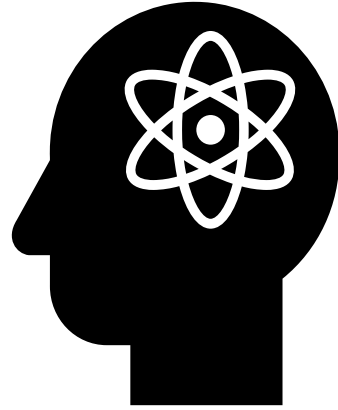
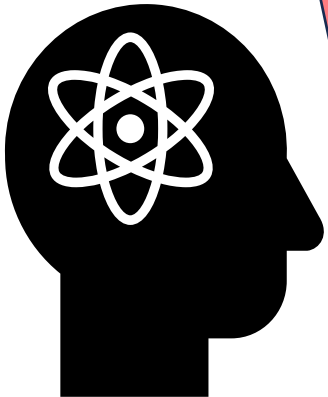
Most Muslims would see gender in the **middle** between these – elements of gender essentialism whilst recognizing that social norms **do** impact our gendered behaviours.

Gender Essentialism

There are **inherent/hardwired differences** between the 2 sexes eg nurturing tendency, strength, competition v co-operation, aggression.

Read "Boys Will Be Boys" by Sh Abdel Hakim Mourad

Gender Identity Ideology



An example of gender constructionism:

Case Study



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- **1966: Dr John Money was an advocate of gender constructionism.**
- Bruce Reimer was 8 months old when his parents took him to Dr Money after a botched circumcision. The doctor advised that sex reassignment was in his best interests.
- Could be **re-socialised as female** as he was so young.
- Twin brother could be a control.
- At 22 months old, had genital reconstructive surgery and was named Brenda. Had hormones and counselling.
- Stress and damage - threatened suicide at 13 if had to see Money again.
- At 15, parents revealed the truth.
- Retransitioned back to David. **His case supports the concept that gender cannot be 100% a social construct. It couldn't be socially constructed for him.**
- Wrote memoir about sexual abuse by Money
- Sadly committed suicide aged 38 years old.

Gender Identity & Non-conformity: What does Islam say?



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Islamic law is based on a gender binary: marriage, divorce, inheritance laws...

Also, a gender binary is important in the social expectations in places of worship, expressions of dress/modesty, etc...

Islam recognises that there are some in-betweens when it comes to gender:

1. The Khuntha: ambiguous genitalia/intersex.

Corrective surgery may be necessary for these individuals.

2. The Mukhanath or Mutarajjila: congenital (from birth) and non-congenital effeminate men, and (the 2nd term) masculine women.

These do not, however, correlate to the modern LGBTQ+ identity definitions.

Gender Identity: What does Islam say?



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Muslims believe that we are created in a **perfect form** by Allah and that this gendered body is in line with biological sex at birth. The majority of Muslim scholars rule gender transition as forbidden.

People of faith should be **compassionate**. The psychological distress and angst of those experiencing gender dysphoria are real and **need support and empathy**.

Gender Identity: Non-conformity



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- Could feelings and identities be **fluid** and change with time? Could young people whose brains are developing need more time than they have when fast-tracked through gender transition services?
- **Early Childhood gender dysphoria often self-resolves by puberty.*** E.g. the case of Keira Bell - who regretted gender transition surgery and is vocal in criticising the pathway that led to surgery. Trauma and neglect played a massive role for her.
- Massive increase in teen gender dysphoria. Why? Have mental health conditions/trauma/social media played a role? There is emerging research evidence that trauma and autism are overrepresented amongst those wanting referral to gender transition services.

* 'Prevalence and Stability of Sexual Orientation Components During Adolescence and Young Adulthood'. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-006-9088-5>

Gender Identity Post-modernity

The Sexual Revolution 1960s + Post-modernity have led to:

- Separation of God
- **Individualism** being prioritised over family and community
- Post-truth world -> loss of anchorage in religious/cultural truths -> loss of identity -> **preoccupation with defining ourselves by feelings and thoughts**
- **Self identification:** 'Be your authentic self!' is a modern mantra
- Lobbying by some LGBTQ+ groups has been very effective in schools, in the corporate setting as well as for the right to gender self-identify. i.e. to be recognised when claiming to be a gender other than one's biological sex (especially without transitioning). This has implications for women's sports, prisons, hospitals etc...

Gender Identity Transitioning & the need for further research



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- There have been criticisms from health professionals from within gender identity services about the ‘fast tracking’ of children onto gender transition pathways, affirmative therapy etc. **The long-term effects of medication e.g. puberty blockers & cross-sex hormones are unknown as of yet** and would require longitudinal studies. **It is best to have counselling first** before rushing to start medication.
- Infertility can be a consequence of cross-sex hormones.

- What are the detransition rates? We don't know and this needs more research. See this literature review:

Michael S. Irwig, ‘Detransition Among Transgender and Gender-Diverse People—An Increasing and Increasingly Complex Phenomenon’, *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, Volume 107, Issue 10, October 2022, Pages e4261–e4262.

<https://academic.oup.com/jcem/article/107/10/e4261/6604653>

- Distress from gender dysphoria is **real**. It is important to note that the **evidence suggests that psychological distress/deep unhappiness do not always resolve after gender transition surgery**. There are some well known cases of regret after gender transition surgery.
- For example, this study that was a long-term follow up of 324 people after gender transition surgery, from 1973-2003. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3043071/>